

Adult Teaching Resources

December 16, 2018



Advent: Someone's Coming (December 2-23)

Luke 21:25-36 – “Coming to Reign”

Malachi 3:1-4 – “Coming to Judge”

Isaiah 12:1-6 (RCL 12:2-6) – “Coming to Save”

Hebrews 10:1-10 (RCL 10:5-10) – “Coming to Sanctify”

Christmas (December 30)

Colossians 3:1-17 – “All in the Name of Jesus”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Coming to Save

Isaiah 12:1-6 (RCL 12:2-6)

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

*“Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.” Isaiah 12:2*

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. On the Advent wreath, we light the pink candle – the candle symbolizing Joy.

Today in our lesson, we explore a passage from Isaiah that is full of joy and praise.

Opening

After everyone has arrived, ask each person to find a partner for sharing and discussion. Once the partners are set, ask them to share their responses to these two questions:

What are some moments in your life when you have been afraid?

What calmed your fears or saved you when you were in those moments?

Give each partnership time to share with each other. Then, ask for volunteers to share with the larger group.

Reading the Bible

Today’s passage from Isaiah is only six verses long. To help bring a deeper understanding to Isaiah’s words of thanksgiving and praise, your group will write their own passage of thanksgiving using this passage as a guide.

Form smaller groups, maybe combining partners from the Opening, and give each small group paper and a pen. Ask each group to read the passage, Isaiah 12 and then re-write the passage with modern words and phrases that make total sense in today’s culture and time. Some of the phrases might be exactly the same, while others might be very different.

Give everyone time to work through this exercise.

After each group has finished, ask them to share their passage with the larger group. What similarities did you notice with the passages? What differences stood out? What is the overall message, or theme, from this chapter of Isaiah?

Reading the Bible *continued*

For group discussion, ask these questions:

What did you learn about thanksgiving and praise from re-writing this passage?

What did you learn about yourself from re-writing this passage?

What did you learn about God from re-writing this passage?

Making Connections

According to the background information provided by our Lesson Writer, what historical events lead up to the writing of this passage?

When have you been able to give thanks to God even though you felt God was angry with you?

Our Lesson Writer says, “Verse 2 sounds like Isaiah’s own testimony, a testimony he would like the people to share: “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.” What is your testimony? How often do you share it?

How has God delivered you from times of trouble? What specific examples can you give of God’s salvific nature in your life?

What good deeds of God can you share with others that will give them a glimpse of God’s greatness? What do you think that will tell them about God?

Our Lesson Writer says, “Those who receive God’s salvation, in other words, are not just to enjoy it and rejoice, but to testify. They are not to hoard God’s blessing for themselves, as the wealthy had sought to accumulate land, but to share the good news of deliverance with others.” How have you been a hoarder of God’s blessings? How have you shared God’s blessings?

So What?

Ask everyone to find their partner from the Opening. Make sure each partnership has space for open, honest conversation around these questions.

How do people of faith put self before God? How does that affect the human and divine relationships?

How do people of faith put selfishness before God? How does that affect the human and divine relationships?

How do people of faith live out selflessness before God? How does that affect human and divine relationships?

How do we typically justify our selfish actions?

So What? *continued*

How do we typically explain our selflessness actions?

How does God want us to live?

How willing are we to live the way God desires?

Give everyone time to talk through these questions before gathering the large group back together. Once everyone is gathered, ask for volunteers to share their thoughts and ideas on these questions.

The Challenge

This week, seek to live every day in a self-less manner – putting God first, others second, and self last.

Prayer

Loving God, on this day we light the candle of Joy and celebrate the third Sunday of Advent, we come before you and praise your name. When we put you first and pay attention to what you desire of us, the way we live, the way we treat others, and the way we experience you transforms us and helps shape your kingdom. Forgive us for trying to do things on our own. Help us to trust you and not be afraid. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text—The Revised Common Lectionary omits v. 1 from the standard reading, but we miss an important aspect of the text if we ignore it. Thus, we’ll consider all six verses of this beautiful oracular song.

Isaiah of Jerusalem—Isaiah of Jerusalem, who we believe was largely responsible for much of the first 33 chapters of the book that bears his name, lived an active prophetic life in and about Jerusalem during much of the third quarter of the eighth century, BCE. The long and prosperous reign of King Uzziah came to an end just as Isaiah received his prophetic call, though it is possible that his ministry began before Uzziah’s death if the vision narrative of Isaiah 6 was not the prophet’s initial call.

Uzziah (see 2 Chronicles 26:1-23) was credited with modernizing the army and gaining ascendancy over the Philistines, Arabians, and Ammonites. These victories gave him control over the major trade routes, allowing the collection of taxes from the caravans that used it. He rebuilt the southern city of Elath on the coast of the Red Sea as a center for the manufacture of copper and iron, and also fostered agricultural improvements.

But, the country’s prosperity had a predictable downside. With wealth in hand and no enemies on the horizon, the people felt more secure. The rich began to buy up more and more property, often leaving the poor without a home and forcing them to work as indentured servants. As is often the case, the rich got richer and the poor became poorer. Both Isaiah and the prophet Micah, his contemporary, would have much to say about the poor ethics of his countrymen.

The end of peace—Isaiah would have lived through several periods of political crisis that would influence his prophecies. In the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis of 734-732 BCE, Syria (also known as Aram) and Israel (the northern kingdom, also known as Ephraim after the nation split) pressured Judah’s King Ahaz to join them in a rebellion against the Assyrians. When Ahaz refused, the two nations attacked Judah, causing many deaths. Troops from Edom and Philistia took advantage of the situation and raided Judah, as well. Ahaz called on the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III for assistance, according to 2 Kings 16, and the Assyrian army halted the enemies’ advance. The situation was little improved, however, as Ahaz was forced to pay tribute to the Assyrians and adopted Assyrian worship practices.

The Ashdod Rebellion took place in 715-711 BCE, as leaders of the small city-state just south of Judah tried to persuade both Egypt and Judah to join in a rebellion against Assyria. Isaiah urged King Hezekiah not to get involved, insisting that security could be found in Yahweh alone, but Hezekiah ignored the prophet’s pleas and join the rebellion, which the Assyrians quashed, bringing greater hardship to Judah.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Hezekiah later chose to withhold tribute and thus revolt against Assyria on his own (705-701 BCE), leading to an invasion by Assyrian forces that destroyed a number of Judahite cities and put Jerusalem under siege for a time, but stopped short of taking the city.

The end result of these revolts was great political instability and increasing oppression by the Assyrians, who conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE and were a constant threat to Jerusalem.

Strength and might—Readers will note the similarity between Isaiah 12 and various psalms of praise, which often include a call to praise God, a list of reasons for which praise is due, and a challenge to proclaim God’s goodness to others.

Isaiah’s testimony in v. 2 recalls a verse from the Song of Moses: “The LORD is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” (Exod. 2:15a). The line is also duplicated in Psalm 118:14: “The LORD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.”

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Why is “LORD GOD” in v. 2 all in uppercase?

Careful readers will note the unusual capitalization of “LORD GOD.” In Bible translations, spelling with all caps traditionally indicates a translation of the personal divine name *Yahweh*, revealed to Moses in Exodus 3.

The most common expression is “LORD God,” which translates *Yahweh ’Elohim*, and appears frequently in the Old Testament, especially in the narrative portions and the psalms. *’Elohim* is a plural form of the name *’El*, which was the name of the high god in the Canaanite pantheon. It was occasionally used for Israel’s God, most often in combination with other words. In Genesis, God is often called *’El Shaddai* (Gen. 17:1, among others, usually translated “Almighty God”). Melchizedek was known as a priest of “*’El ’Elyon* (Gen. 14:18-22), or “God Most High.” The plural form *’Elohim*, known to grammarians as a “plural of majesty,” may have been adopted to distinguish Israel’s God from the Canaanite *’El*, with the plural form indicating greater power. It is typically translated “God,” so *Yahweh ’Elohim* is translated as “LORD God.”

Some of the prophets preferred to refer to God as *’Adonai Yahweh*, with *’Adonai* being a generic word for “Lord.” Hence, this is usually translated as “Lord GOD,” with GOD representing the name *Yahweh*.

Isaiah 12:2, along with Isaiah 26:4, have the unusually spelled title “LORD GOD.” Why? It is because in these places Isaiah refers to God as “*Yah, Yahweh*,” an abbreviation of the divine name followed by the full spelling. Since a form of the divine name *Yahweh* appears twice in succession, translators tend to opt for “LORD GOD,” with both names in all uppercase.